

## Determinants of Turnout in Elections: A Case Study of 2008 General Elections in District Charsadda

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In electoral studies understanding of voting behaviour at national level carry its own value, but there is a need to study the political behaviour at the micro level also. Turnout in elections is considered to be the measurement of the level of democratization. Pakistan being a third world country usually do not have good turnout in elections. Turnout in election is determined by various factors ranging from personal and group leverages to structural arrangements for the process of participation of the people in the election. The study is conducted in a rural region of Pakistan in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa not only to obtain the voters' opinion but an effort is made to analyse the data in the existing socio economic and political conditions. It is hoped that the study will add to the existing scarce literature available in Pakistan on voting behaviour of people and their political participation.

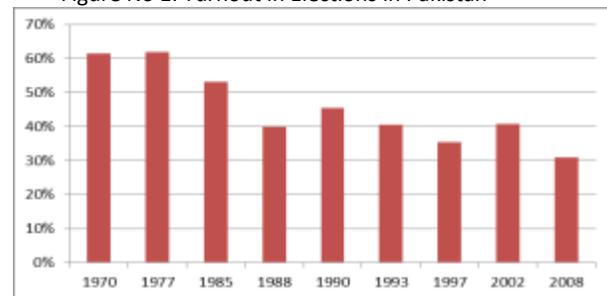
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Will of the people is the source of democracy, through which people elect their representatives, who onward take part in the process of policy making and policy implementation. The method by which the political will is translated into action is general elections. Elections provide an opportunity to people especially to the marginalized communities such as physically handicapped, ethnic and religious minorities, poor people and women to participate in the political affairs of the state. It is the processes by which governments are chosen, monitored, and changed. The parameter of political participation is the voters' turnout (Segal, 1974). Voting turnout is, defined as the proportion of persons of legal voting age who actually vote in a given election (Luttbeg, 1991). According to S.M. Lipset, turnout varies from country to country. A number of environmental factors influence turnout: whether, the election is taking place at a time of crisis; the extent to which the individual is subjected to group pressures to vote; the extent to which the individual is subjected to cross-pressured (Althoff, 1972). According to the Election Commission of Pakistan a person, who is a citizen of Pakistan, have the right to cast the vote who; is not less than 18 years of age on the first day of January of the year in which the rolls are prepared or revised; is not declared by a competent court to be of unsound mind and is deemed to be a resident of an electoral area, can get himself enrolled as a voter in that electoral area.

After independence, Pakistan adopted a democratic system of government and first election took place in the Bengal province in 1951, while the first general elections were held in 1970. Even during the military dictatorship, elections were conducted to legitimize their rule in Pakistan. The turnout in these elections varies, but till the 2008 elections there seems to be a decline in voter participation. Turnout in elections in Pakistan has fallen from 61.45% in the 1970 election to 45% in the 2008 elections. The turnout in

the elections in District Charsadda has fallen from 34.70% in 1990 (Pakistan, 1990) and 32.5% in 2002 (Pakistan, 2002) to 32.2% in 2008 (ECP, 2008).

Figure No 1. Turnout in Elections in Pakistan



Elections provide the means through which the most important and controversial question, i.e., "who should rule the state?" is decided. Through election competition in society can be channelized into a constructive process with common rules to choose representatives of the people. Holding of free and fair elections, requires a conducive environment, including the right to freedom of opinion, the right to peaceful assembly, the right to freedom from fear and intimidation, irrespective of gender, race, language, religion, political or other belief. Citizens; both men and women, need to be involved in the developmental processes of a state without which prosperity in all aspects is not imaginable.

### Elections and Turnout

People should not feel excluded from the mainstream of society and everyone should have the opportunity to improve their well-being. A responsible representative government can do all these developmental works because it is elected by a large number of votes. Turnout in Pakistan in 1970 elections was 61.45%, in 1977 elections, 61.88%, 53.2% in 1985, 40% in 1988, 45.5% in 1990, 40.51% in 1993, 35.43% in 1997, 40.69% in 2002, 45% in the 2008 elections (Khan, 2009). Turnout has gradually dropped by 16.45% since 1970. The turnout ratio in Pakistan is very low. The highest ratio of

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turnout is 30% to 40%. If 30% of the votes are divided on four or five contesting candidates only that candidate will be successful who get 10% votes. It means successful candidate will be a representative of 10% voters only. These ten percent voters are loyal voters who may have financial and other benefits from the candidate. The candidate knows that he can easily get this support and win the election.

Through their votes, citizens communicate information about their interests, preferences, and needs and make an important decision about who should be elected to the office? Assuming that low turnout is a reflection of regret or indifference in a society, a poll with very low turnout may not be an accurate reflection of the will of the community. On the other hand, if low turnout is a reflection of the gratification of voters about likely winning candidates or political parties, then low turnout is as judicious as high turnout, as long as the right to vote exists. Low turnouts lead to unequal representation among various parts of the community. In our society, non-voters tend to be concentrated in particular demographic and socio-economic groups, especially the women, youngsters and poor people.

Elections ensuring that officials in public, private and voluntary organizations are answerable for their actions and that there is redress when duties and commitments are not met. In general elections all 18 years old citizens are allowed to participate in the political affairs of the state through casting their votes. Reasonable turnout in an election strengthens the responsiveness of the elected representative and also proves the effectiveness and confidence of the masses on the system. However, if there is a low turnout, it may affect the governance negatively. In such a situation the elected representative feels less pressure from the public while it also indicates the lack of interest of voters in the national, public and political affairs.

Charsadda remained one of the regions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where social, educational and political activities took place earlier than other areas of KP. It remained a hub of very important political movements like Khudai Khidmatgar in the pre-independence days, National Awami Party (founded in 1954 at Dacca), Awami National Party (founded in 1986) and Qawmi Watan Party (founded in 2012)<sup>1</sup>, headed by Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao in the post-independence period. With such a historical roots and political consciousness, the study may help to know the existing trend of the voters and direction of politics. Each of the variables has an impact upon the choice of an individual behaviour to vote or not to vote of the voters regarding casting their votes.

<sup>1</sup> Qaumi Watan Party formerly called Pakistan Peoples Party–Sherpao (PPP–S), is one of the prominent political parties in Pakistan, that split away from the Pakistan Peoples Party just before the 2002 general election. In October 2012, it was renamed to Qaumi Watan Party when it changed its political agenda and declared itself as a Pashtun neo-nationalist party.

**Method**

The selection of District Charsadda for the present study is due to its historical and political importance other than the reason that it is the hometown of one of the authors. Data have been collected through a survey comprising of a multi-stage random and systematic sampling. Population of the study is the registered voters of district Charsadda. The total number of registered voters in Charsadda as per elections 2008 was 520779 divided into 49 Union Councils. To get a representative sample size, an overall 500 voters were selected on the basis of a multi stage sample technique given below:

**Stage 1:** In stage one, an overall 20% (10) Union Councils were selected out of 49 i.e., 10 Union Councils. These Union Councils were selected randomly. Names of these Union Councils are, Hisara Nehri, Dhakki, Dosehra, Gandhera, Khan Mahi, Mirzadhir, MC 1 Charsadda, Deri Zardad, Sherpao, Shodag.

**Stage two:** In stage two, about 50 voters were selected from each selected Union Council. So the overall sample size comes to 500 respondents. These respondents were selected from the voters’ lists on the basis of random and systematic techniques. Out of 500 respondents, 250 were selected from female and 250 from male voters list. But majority of female voters did not return questionnaires due to socio-cultural and religious constraints.

The study of turnout in Charsadda was carried out with various variables like age, gender, education, occupation, family structure and economic position of the voters. How each of the variables is related to turnout is analysed and wherever possible than explained.

**Age Consideration**

Literature on the electoral politics studies refers age as an important contributing factor towards the turnout. Relatively large proportion of young people whose name appear in the electoral list for the first time are having enormous enthusiasm in going to the polling booth for voting (Safell, 1991). On the other hand the hurdle of initial registration creates barriers of voting for young that are less likely to affect the older voters. Due to physical weakness of the people above the age of 60, the turnout decreases. The question “did you cast your vote in the elections 2008” asked from the respondents the following answers received (Details of which are shown in Table No.1).

Table 1

*Age and turnout*

| Answers        | 18-30       | 31-40      | 41-50      | Above 50   | Total      |
|----------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Yes            | 59 (33.1%)  | 47 (26.4%) | 37 (20.8%) | 35 (19.7%) | 178 (100%) |
| No             | 54 (37.2%)  | 50 (34.5%) | 26 (17.9%) | 15 (10.3%) | 145 (100%) |
| Don't remember | 4 (30.8%)   | 2 (15.4%)  | 7 (53.8%)  | 0 (0.0%)   | 13 (100%)  |
| Total          | 117 (34.8%) | 99 (29.5%) | 70 (20.8%) | 50 (14.9%) | 336 (100%) |

*Chi-square=17.190, p-value= 0.009*

Result of the survey shows that majority of the respondents belonging to the age group 18-30 years (59=33.1%) voted in the election, followed by a large number of age group of 31 to 40 years, and some of the age group of 41 to 50 years and a few of the above 50 years voted in the election 2008. The ratio of those who are above 50 years of age group was very low as compared to other younger age group of respondents. The reason may be that in younger age an individual is more energetic and curious to participate in the political activities as compared to the voters of older age (Cathrine, 2004). The chi square test provides significant p-value. The p-value<0.05 indicates that age plays a key role in voters turnout.

#### Gender Consideration

Pakhtun society is a male dominated society. Females do not have a significant position in the politics of our society. Female voters are not encouraged to cast their vote. In some of the constituencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the candidates and political parties sign an agreement on the question of disallowing female voters, particularly in rural areas to cast their vote in elections (FAFEN, 2012). Therefore, a large portion of society is kept away from polling stations during elections. This scarcity of women from politics significantly affects the turnout ratio. Table 2 shows the participation of male and female voters in the election.

Table 2

#### Gender and turnout

| Answers        | Male       | Female      | Total      |
|----------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Yes            | 134        | 44 (24.7%)  | 178 (100%) |
| No             | 63 (43.4%) | 82 (56.6%)  | 145(100%)  |
| Don't remember | 7 (53.8%)  | 6 (46.2%)   | 13 (100%)  |
| Total          | 204(60.7%) | 132 (39.3%) | 336 (100%) |

*Chi-square=34. 215, p-value= 0.000*

In Pakhtun society male is usually responsible to run the family affairs. Therefore, they are politically more conscious and participate in political activities in large scale as compared to female. The figure in the table: 2 shows that male voters constituted a majority in the 2008 held elections while female voters constituted ¼ of the total membership of voters. There is 3:1 between male and female voters in the election. The chi square test result shows us highly significant p-value. The p-value<0.05 shows that gender plays a significant role in turnout.

#### Level of Education

Education is widely held to be one of the most important determinants of the voting turnout. Some subjects like social studies, Pakistan studies at school level and civics at the higher secondary level acquaint the students with certain concepts related to state and government and various other socio-political institutions. Whereas informal political education is learnt through participation in political discussion, watching talk shows on TV and taking part in political party meetings and election campaign and rallies, etc. Voters with a background in college and university education consider voting as a national duty (Jan, 1998-2000). If they are compared to the illiterate, there is probability to exercise the right to vote with more enthusiasm. The more educated voter would cast votes with the understanding that he has a role to play in the formation of government (Jan, 1998-2000). But the study shows not very supporting evidence to the above mentioned claims (See Table 3).

Table 3

#### Education and turnout

| Answers        | Primary   | Middle    | Matric     | Intermediate | Bachelor   | Master     | Others    | Illiterate | Total      |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Yes            | 13(7.3%)  | 14 (7.9%) | 29 (16.3%) | 24 (13.2%)   | 20 (11.2%) | 29 (16.3%) | 1 (0.6%)  | 48 (27%)   | 178 (100%) |
| No             | 8 (5.5%)  | 8 (5.5%)  | 17 (11.7%) | 16 (11%)     | 14 (9.7)   | 28 (19.3%) | 1 (.7%)   | 53 (36.6%) | 145 (100%) |
| Don't remember | 3 (23.1%) | 1 (7.7%)  | 4 (30.8%)  | 0 (0.00%)    | 0 (0.00%)  | 2 (15.4%)  | 0 (0.00%) | 3 (23.1%)  | 13 (100%)  |
| Total          | 24 (7.1%) | 23 (6.8%) | 50 (14.9%) | 40 (11.9%)   | 34 (10%)   | 59 (17.6%) | 2 (0.60%) | 104 (31%)  | 336 (100%) |

*Chi-square=16.011, p-value= 0.313*

Among the respondents who cast their votes in the 2008 elections, illiterate percentage was 27% (48 out of a sample of 178) followed by those who had education up to matriculation and Masters' 29 each.

The chi square test result shows insignificant p-value. The p-value<0.05 represents that education does not play any significant role in turnout. This is quite strange in our study on district Charsadda, while usually educated people are more likely to cast their votes than the uneducated one.

**Peoples' Occupation**

Individuals are engaged in certain professions and it is the nature of one's profession that sometimes determines an individual's voting behaviour. The government and non-government employs are more active in participating in

election than other people, may be because they read newspapers, watching TV and discuss political issues in educated circles (See for details table 4).

Table 4  
*Occupation and turnout*

| Answers        | Government Employes | Non-government Employes | Labor     | Businessmen | Unemployed | Agriculture | Maulana  | Housewives | Total      |
|----------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|------------|------------|
| Yes            | 53 (29.8%)          | 12 (6.7%)               | 17 (9.6%) | 19 (10.7%)  | 15 (8.4%)  | 40 (22.5%)  | 3 (1.7%) | 19 (10.7%) | 178 (100%) |
| No             | 28 (19.3%)          | 4 (2.8%)                | 11 (7.6%) | 9 (6.2%)    | 13 (9%)    | 12 (8.3%)   | 3 (2.1%) | 65 (44.8%) | 145 (100%) |
| Don't remember | 1 (7.7%)            | 1 (7.7%)                | 2 (15.4%) | 1 (7.7%)    | 1 (7.7%)   | 2 (15.4%)   | 0 (0.0%) | 5 (38.5%)  | 13 (100%)  |
| Total          | 82 (24.4%)          | 17 (5.1%)               | 30 (8.9%) | 29 (8.6%)   | 29 (8.6%)  | 54 (16.1%)  | 6 (1.8%) | 89 (26.5%) | 336 (100%) |

Chi-square=56.955, p-value= 0.000

As evident from the Table-4 that the largest number of voters exercising their right of adult franchise was the government servants, followed by some of those engaged in farming and the rest were shopkeepers, businessmen and housewives.

52(35.9%) did not vote in the election, while 93 (64.1%) of joint family did not cast their ballot. The chi square test provides insignificant p-value which is 0.941. The p-value>0.05 reveals that nature of family structure haven't any role in turnout.

The analysis of the data through chi square test pinpointing p-value as highly significant. The p-value<0.05 shows that profession played a vital role in the turnout of voters in Charsadda in 2008 general elections.

**Income Group Consideration**

Money in many ways provides facilities and opportunities to the individuals. Rich and wealthy people are supposed to be politically more aware than poor people and, therefore, wealthy people take more interest in electioneering perhaps for the sake of protecting their personal, entrepreneurial and professional interests. How different income earning groups responded to the question detail is given in Table No. 6.

**Family Structure**

There are two types of family structures in district Charsadda. One is a joint family and the second one is single or nuclear family.<sup>2</sup> It is assumed that a joint family structure will play a key role in political socialization of an individual. If the head of a family is active in politics, other family members would also be active in politics. Family structure provides an effective ground for an individual to involve himself in politics. However, the result of the survey shows a different picture (See Table No. 5).

Table 6  
*Income and turnout*

| Answers        | 5000 to 10000 | 11000 to 20000 | 21000 to 30000 | Above 31000 | Did not mention their monthly income | Total      |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Yes            | 42 (23.6%)    | 31 (17.4%)     | 12 (6.7%)      | 3 (1.7%)    | 90 (50.6%)                           | 178 (100%) |
| No             | 18 (12.4%)    | 20 (13.8%)     | 4 (2.8%)       | 2 (1.4%)    | 101 (69.7%)                          | 145 (100%) |
| Don't remember | 1 (7.7%)      | 0 (0.00%)      | 0 (0.00%)      | 1 (7.7%)    | 11 (84.6%)                           | 13 (100%)  |
| Total          | 61 (18.2%)    | 51 (15.2%)     | 16 (4.8%)      | 6 (1.8%)    | 202 (60%)                            | 336 (100%) |

Chi-square=21.247, p-value= 0.007

Table 5  
*Familial Relations and turnout*

| Answers        | Single family | Joint family | Total      |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|------------|
| Yes            | 67 (37.6%)    | 111 (62.4%)  | 178 (100%) |
| No             | 52 (35.9%)    | 93 (64.1%)   | 145 (100%) |
| Don't remember | 5 (38.5%)     | 8 (61.5%)    | 13 (100%)  |
| Total          | 124 (36.9%)   | 212 (63.1%)  | 336 (100%) |

Chi-square=.123, p-value= 0.941

Majority of the respondents, 50.6%, who did not mention their monthly income cast their votes in elections 2008, followed by those whose monthly income was 5000 to 10000 rupees. Respondents from income group, 11000 to 20000 rupees constituted 17.4%, while respondents from income group earning of above 31000 rupees monthly constituted 1.7% only in 2008 general elections. Respondents who did not mention their monthly income is probably due to a fear that the data may be used by income tax department or any other government department to impose tax upon them. The chi square test provides significant p-value<0.05. As a result, we can say that monthly income has an important role in turnout.

Majority of the respondents who voted in 2008 general elections were living in joint family 111 (62.4%) while 67 (37.6%) of the respondents of single family cast their vote in the elections. Those voters who, hailing from single families

7. Joint Family composed of parents, their children, and the children, spouses and offspring in one household. In KP mostly people live in Joint family system. Single family refers to a family of wife, husband and their Children.

### Turnout in the General Elections 2008

The turnout in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is imbalance and fluctuating. Election Commission Reports show a low turnout in the 2008 elections (Pakistan, www.ecp.gov.pk, 2008). There is a need to find out the causes of the low turnout. Many of the people do not have any idea about the importance of the vote. They consider it just a piece of paper having no concern with their future and development. Such a political culture reduces the role of common men in the politics. A reasonable cause of the low turnout in the election is the lack of trust on politicians and the present political system. During election campaign, politicians visited each and every village to appeal the voters, but after elections people think that they haven't shown any concern about those people whom they voted. However, education, media and local political activists play a positive role in the political awareness of the masses of Charsadda. The awareness among masses about the policies and intentions of the politicians are increasing with the passage of time. Majority of the voters has the idea to vote only those people who are more optimistic about the future performance of the MPA and MNA. A question, "why you did not cast your vote in general election 2008?" was asked from the respondents to find out the reasons for not casting their votes in elections (See Table No. 7).

Table 7  
*General elections 2008 and turnout*

| If not, for what reason?             | Male       | Female     | Total        |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Lack of trust in politicians         | 23 (52.3%) | 21 (47.7%) | 44 (100.0%)  |
| No trust on electoral process        | 2 (15.4%)  | 11 (84.6%) | 13 (100.0%)  |
| Boycott of elections by the party    | 11 (84.6%) | 2 (15.4%)  | 13 (100.0%)  |
| The polling station is very far away | 8 (100.0%) | 0 (.0%)    | 8 (100.0%)   |
| Was out of Pakistan.                 | 8 (100.0%) | 0 (.0%)    | 8 (100.0%)   |
| Because of domestic problems         | 5 (100.0%) | 0 (.0%)    | 5 (100.0%)   |
| Women were not allowed to vote.      | 0 (.0%)    | 37(100.0%) | 37 (100.0%)  |
| Don't remember                       | 8 (42.1%)  | 11(57.9%)  | 19 (100.0%)  |
| Total                                | 65 (44.2%) | 82(55.8%)  | 147 (100.0%) |

*Chi-square=69.996, p-value= 0.000*

Forty four respondents who did not cast their votes in election 2008, attributed this to their lack of trust on politicians, followed by 37 women voters who said that they were not allowed to poll their votes. 19 respondents gave preference to their social obligations like farming, attaining a funeral ceremony, etc., instead of going to polling booths for casting their votes.

### Factors Responsible for low Turnout:

After a close study of the turnout in the 2008 elections, the following factors can be contributed to the low turnout in Charsadda.

### Issue of National Identity Card

The minimum age limit for a Pakistani citizen to hold a national identity card is 18 years (NADRA, 2012). But it is a sorrowful situation that the people face many procedural difficulties<sup>3</sup> in getting National Identity Cards. National Identity Card is must for identification of a voter to cast his/her vote. A considerable number of people not holding Identity Cards fail to exercise the right to vote otherwise they were interested in casting their vote in the election (Wali ur Rehman, 2012).

### Voters outside from their Hometowns

A considerable number of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly of District Charsadda, belong to lower middle class. Having no means of earning livelihood in their home town, people move to other places like Karachi and Peshawar even abroad in search of jobs.<sup>4</sup> A voter who is out of his constituency is having less concern to come to his/her constituency for merely casting vote in the elections.<sup>5</sup>

### Remote Polling Stations

District Charsadda comprised mainly rural areas. An industrial base in the whole district could not be developed primarily due to the feudal culture in the region. Agricultural production is the main source of income. Polling stations established in the areas are not easily accessible to the people and thus created an inconvenience for voters. A large number of voters thus do not bother to go to such a distant polling station and cast their votes. For example Hisara Nihri Union Council, the polling station for the voters of Dado Kali and Zar Gul Kali is in Tangi Gulabad, located at a distance of 12 Kilometers (Khan H. N., 2012). An underprivileged voter cannot afford to travel the polling station on his own expenses.

### Political Parties Boycott of Elections

On the expiration of the five years tenure of PML-Q government in 2007, President General Pervez Musharraf appointed an interim government headed by Muhammad Mian Somro as the Prime Minister. Election Commission announced January 8, 2008 as the date for the general election. Meanwhile, Miss Benazir Bhutto ex-prime minister

<sup>3</sup> There are many issues concerning formation of national identity card. If a person lost his identity card then he should report a FIR in the local police station. This report is then producing in the office and it usually takes more than three months to make a new identity card. Such a lengthy process denied the person to make an identity card in time. In case of correction of a mistake in the information provided to the office or entered wrongly by the office personal is also a laborious process.

<sup>4</sup> In recent days there is a strong support to the voting right of expatriate Pakistanis. There is possibility of allowing them the right of vote in the next election i.e., 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the political parties provide vehicles for the voters, however in the new election laws this practice by the political parties is disallowed.

of Pakistan and chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party was murdered after she completed her address to an election rally in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007. The law and order situation in the whole country particularly in Sindh worsened. In such a situation the elections were postponed to February 18, 2008. The ambivalent position of some political parties and boycott by others affected the turnout in the election 2008. On November 3, 2007 General Musharraf sacked Iftikhar Muhammad Choudry as the Chief Justice of Pakistan without the procedure prescribed in the 1973 constitution. A new chief Justice was appointed, and emergency was imposed throughout the country. Political parties and other civil society organizations not only declared that this is an unconstitutional act, but also launched a very forceful movement for the restoration of judiciary. But General Musharraf refused to restore the judiciary. As a reaction a political turmoil started in the whole country against the government. Lawyers also started a movement for the restoration of judiciary. Consequently, Jamaat-I-Islami, Tehreek-I-Insaf and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party boycotted the elections, which also reduced the turnout in the said elections.

#### **Lack of Trust on Politicians**

One of the outcomes of the 1985 non-Party general elections was the formation of PML (Junejo group). On account of its enjoying the patronage of General Zia ul Haq, the party came to be known as "Kings Party". In 1988, new elections were conducted resulting success of the PPP as a major political party. As no political party enjoying an absolute majority in the national elections, shifting of loyalties of the MNAs started from the government benches to the opposition and vice versa. This greatly made the politicians distrustful and a term *lotacracy*<sup>6</sup> was started to be used in this situation. From then onward, it became a regular feature of Pakistani politics that a politician may, at any movement change his loyalty for various reasons. The act is perceived by the public for personal gains. This made the electorate to think seriously about the credibility of politicians. Likewise, the frequent disruption of the democratic process and the decreasing role of elected institutions in decision making reduced the electoral process to a futile exercise. Because of the continuation of the floor crossing, a large number of people lose their faith in the election process and did not cast their votes in the election (Wali ur Rehman, 2012).

#### **Female Voters Discouraged to vote**

Fifty two percent of the Pakistani population is female; the ratio of female turnout in elections was very low. A number of reasons can be attributed to the low female turnout in elections;

#### **Socio-Political Reasons**

In Pakhtun society, male family members have a dominant role in decision making, even the engagement of a female and other important matters related to her matrimonial affairs are decided by the male family members. Without authorization of male family members she is not allowed to go outside four walls of the house. According to the Assistant Commissioner, Election Commission, Charsadda, if in a society a wife cannot cross a road without the permission of her husband, how she can cast her vote independently (Mohmand, 2012). In said society, the female is totally dependent on male and the opinion of men carries greater weight over that of women. Another important reason is the agreement that reaches among the contesting candidates under which they decide not to take out their women to the polling booth for casting votes.

#### **Lack of Political Awareness**

There is very low political awareness among the women. They are only passive observers of electoral activities (Waseem, 1994). They always follow male family members in elections. If majority of male voters cast their vote to a party "A" definitely female also follow that decision and if they are not going to vote, the female cannot cast their votes. Though with the spread of education, a change has taken place, but the change process is slow and will take time to run full circle.

#### **Difficulties in Mobility**

There are no proper arrangements for the female polling stations. The issue of veil and other limitations of society greatly affect female's participation in politics. If election commission is able to reduce these problems, then in future the number of female voters turnout in elections may increase considerably. The women folk are ignored in elections. They are treated like those citizens who have no political rights. If this segment of society is ignored in elections definitely the turnout will be lowered than expected.

#### **Lower Income Group showed less Interest in Voting**

Socio-economic factors have played a key role in our understanding of who votes. The financially stable people, enjoying the adequate amount of free time, can offer themselves for participation in the political process. Their influence and, sometime, financial support, elevate the electoral candidate to the assemblies. People with low income tend to have less motivation towards voting. Being pre-occupied with the worry for earning bread and butter they feel less inclined to elections and the electoral process (Burns, 1966). People with higher income, have a greater economic security and, hence participate in electoral process more enthusiastically.

#### **Conclusion**

It is an accepted fact that the ratio of turnout in developing societies is lower than developed societies. District Charsadda also is an underdeveloped area and voters

<sup>6</sup> Horse Trading, Floor crossing and *lotacracy* are similar terms. The term is used for those politicians who change their loyalties for personal gains. They are always changing their loyalties to protect their personal interests.

are still politically backward and majority of the people are not taking interest in elections. That is the reasons that a considerable number of voters (157 out of 336 respondents) did not cast their votes in General Election 2008. Respondents gave different reasons including; lack of trust on politicians and the electoral process in Pakistan. To them elections is only a formality and it cannot bring any change of happiness in their daily life. Other reasons for the low turnout are boycott of political parties, inaccessibility of the polling stations, residing outside the constituency and having no provision to cast their votes while outside the country. According to local traditions female voters were not allowed to cast their vote in the 2008 election and they preferred to stay at home on Election Day. It is for the policy makers to look at the matter judiciously and move towards brining structural and procedural changes in the election rules and regulations. Besides they should involve all local elements in the election process that can influence the opinion and behaviour of the people towards elections. Increase in the turnout will help trust of the people on democracy which is a dire need to strengthen democracy in Pakistan.

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